

A Dissertation
On
Atrophia Ab lactatorum
By
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~~1820~~

admitted March 15. 1821

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Atrophia Ab-lactatorum

^{or}
Weaning Brash

The diseases of infants are for the most part obscure, and require much skill and discernment on the part of the practitioner.

We can only judge of disease by its symptoms, and therefore in such patients we are obliged many of those communications, which lead to correct inferences. Notwithstanding we have many external signs which serve as usefull guides. The disease which I have chosen as the subject of my dissertation will exemplify this fact very clearly. I shall therefore without farther preliminary, commence the history of its symptoms.

Weaning brash is produced by weaning too suddenly at an improper season of the year.

It is most common in summer and autumn when the weather is still and sultry. I have an example of this fact from my own observation. During the last summer in Prince Edward Virginia, the weather was remark-

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ably salutary and many children fell a sacrifice to this disease. It generally comes on two or three days after weaning, however there is not much regularity in this respect; sometimes two or three weeks; at others six weeks will elapse before the disease commences.

The first symptom indicating the disease is a purging with griping pain, in which the discharge is of a green colour. Added to this symptom, after the disease has continued some time, there is a retching with or without vomiting; if accompanied with the latter the matter is usually coloured with bile. These distressing affections of the digestive organs create a loathing of every kind of food, and are attended with emaciation, restlessness, thirst, and fever.

After the disease has progressed some weeks, a hectic blush may be frequently observed on the cheeks, but what is regarded as the most

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characteristic symptom, is a constant feverishness, caused by the unceasing griping pain, and denoted by the whine of the child, but more especially by the settled discontent of its features. This peculiar expression of discontent is more strongly marked towards the close of the disease, when the countenance has participated in the general emaciation.

In the progress of the disease, different actions ensue in the alimentary canal, and considerable alteration in the biliary secretion; for the discharge sometimes appears of the natural colour, at other times slimy or ash coloured, and sometimes bilenteric.

As a consequence of debility towards the end of the disease, the extremities swell, and the child becomes exceedingly drowsy. It is said by Cheyne, that at this stage of the disease, the purging will sometimes discon-

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times for a day or two; but without any amelioration of the bad symptoms; on the contrary, the decay will be much more rapid than when the purging is most violent.

The disease seldom terminates fatally before the sixth or seventh week; and ~~in~~ in this short space of time the most healthy children will become wretchedly emaciated. Sometimes recoveries take place after a continuance of three or four months, but this favourable issue is very rare; and again, from the excessive vomiting and purging, or from convulsions produced by irritation in the bowels, death will ensue, in the second, third, or fourth week, before the disease has arrived at its acme.

The disease is most frequent in children ~~under~~ who have been weaned before the eighth or ninth month, and particularly, in consequence of weaning abruptly. Cheyne re-

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swelled, nor inflamed, no
where there was no appearance of
inflammation about the month. But the strong-
est argument which can be adduced

That the disease often appears several
months before the usual period of
menstruation. The disease has also been
traced to obstructions in the menstrual
arteries, and from the circumstance that
it is most frequent among those of a
sanguineous disposition and also from the
facts reported by physicians the disease
is easily proved to. The author also
has mentioned as at first inclined
to this belief. From subsequent observa-
tions however he was induced to take
a different view of the subject. Regarding
it as the only pure and simple form
in which it exists pathologists are
obliged he not diligently to work and



The result of his inspection is that the
enlarged mesenteric glands are rather the
effect than the cause of the disease.

It was also a discovery that the el-
ectricity passed from the stomach down-
wards accompanied with singular commo-
tions and had in its course one or more
violent suspensions, that the liver was
exceedingly firm, larger than ordi-
nary, of a bright red colour, and that
the portal blood was enlarged and ex-
hibited a dark green bile. In some dissec-
tions the mesenteric glands were ex-
tended and inflamed in the human body
were usually enlarged and had no
appearance of inflammation. It often
occurs that these mesenteric glands
are entirely of a spermatic nature
as the vessels could be easily separated
from the surrounding portions of the

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of the ventricle as the contracted por-
tion is easily and permanently dilated
by the introduction of the finger.

From these morbid appearances the
rather imagined that the disease
resulted from an increased secre-
tion of acid bile or rather from a
morbid condition of the liver which
is not to be taken as a corollary. It
that the morbid condition is
a local one, but it is extensive
from the bottom, vomiting and
from the bottom by stool, in the early
stage of the disease.

As the disease is allowed to take, the
in consequence of abrupt weanings
origin and several propriety admits of
the following explanation. The de-



Faculty of a child's stomach, and the quality
of the secretions concerned in digestion,
require food of a mild nature. The me-
thod with which it accustoms as early as a
Teacher, and as nature designed. Nor can
it be expected that the child will be able to
perform its function. The liver excited
in sympathy, ceases, from its intimate
relation existing between all the
visceral viscera, secretes an ex-
cessive quantity of bile, and that of a vitiated
quality. This poured into the intestine
occasions the bilious vomiting, and
green dejections observable in the
early stages of the disease. By the
means the stomach and alimentary
canal are rendered incapable of performing
their duty, and if the child were
not to its appropriate diet, the

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disease - acute and be continued. But
the same is also observed that of
feet - in the same manner, and
therefore give all the same symptoms and
show the same signs of the disease. The
Lungs irritated by their acid con-
tents are thrown into spasmodic
and permanent contractions, the mu-
cous glands synchizing with
the alimentary canal in virtue of
the same irritations, thus the
digestive apparatus becomes in-
flamed enlarged and obstructed
the body wastes until at length it
exhausts and expires as in the
case.

Having considered the symptoms,
and pathology of the disease in ac-
cording to the above, I must conclude by
making some remarks on the treatment.



Before Dr. Hays has adopted
the practice of being so
pursuing of the disease, he has not
yet fully satisfied. At one time
he recommended opiate to check the
vomiting; at another, anxious to have
it stopped. This practice he found
to be eminently injurious, supposing
that the disease was allied to
dysentery, he administered ipecacuan-
ha as an emetic, and in small do-
se as an antispasmodic. This latter course
was altogether unsucce-
ssful in the early stage of the disease. In
the early attacks, and always in the
early stage, it might prove
beneficial to administer small
doses of rhubarb at intervals of one
day, and in the mean time to employ
the method of a grain of ipecacuanha



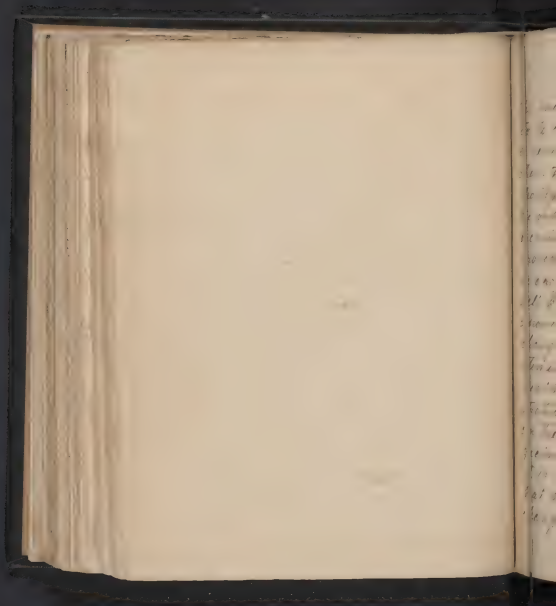
which are aromatic, every four or five
hours. Should the discharge from the
breast be attended with much griping,
the diet should be composed of mucilage
of starch or a fine emulsion of
olive oil might be given. The
same treatment will be of little
avail, unless a due attention be paid
to diet. It is certainly most ad-
visable to recur to the breast, if obtaining
it. This however, is not always the
case. We should therefore select
such diet as is least irritating. A
milk diet, is less irritating than
one wholly composed of vegetables.
Eggs curried, custards, rice
pudding, meat broths freed of their oil
by fat, thin rice, or barley water mix-
ed with a small portion of skimmed
milk are the articles of diet best adapted



the other extreme particularities
and are to be avoided.

It is important that we should
prevent the child from cold, and
thereby cold feet. Every person
must have experienced the cold
and discomfort from cold feet
in travel, especially. It is therefore
advisable to keep the feet warm
with warm socks. These
should be worn next the skin, so
that the feet are warm and
the warm socks should be changed.

In a case of such stage of the
disease, the medicine which I have
described would prove abortive. It
become necessary that we should
resort to more effective means.
and remedy more serious
complications now the patient.



the one is particularly adap-
ted to children, one therefore should
be resorted to in preference to the
other. We have very respectable au-
thority in its favour, particularly
the author - has some I have had
occasion to mention. The food is
proved much more efficacious when
he enables the use of calomel. It is
well known that calomel exerts
a powerful influence on the liver,
changing its morbid condition and
stimulating it to the action of
health. This effect is clearly demon-
strated in the disease of which I
am treating. By giving half a
grain every morning and evening
it is observed in a short time
that the stool undergoes a marked
change. The discharge which was

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of a dark green, or ash colour, becomes of a dark mahogany colour, and generally more offensive.

This change always affords a favourable prognosis. In a little time the child becomes free from fever, more placid, and in a day or two after the appetite returns, with the former complexion, and every demonstration of health. When the medicine is exhibited as above mentioned, it is said never to produce salivation, or any unpleasant effects.

